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TAGS: KPAO OPRC KMDR PREL
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; IRAQ; PRESS FREEDOM IN VENEZUELA AND
ARGENTINA; 09/07/07

11. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's major international stories are related to a report issued by a US independent commission of military experts on the situation in Iraq; as well as to the infringements on and attacks against press freedom in both Venezuela and Argentina.

12. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "No (guaranteed) security in Iraq for at least 18 months"

Ana Barson, Washington-based correspondent for leading "Clarn," writes (09/07) "An independent commission of military experts said yesterday that the Iraqi army could only be in a position to guarantee territorial security within 12 to 18 months.

"It also concluded that the Iraqi police should also be dissolved to create a new force because it is 'sectarian and corrupt.' In this scenario, the head of the committee, retired General Thomas Jones of the Marines, underlined that setting a date for US troop withdrawal 'would go against our national interests.'

"However, the committee, which was established by Capitol Hill to assess the situation in Iraq, did not surprise anyone with its findings. The failure of Bush's strategy is obvious, although what captured the attention was the Democrats' reaction.

"... After the commission's report was made public, the Lower House and Senate Democratic leaders, Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid, conveyed several signs that they would no longer demand to set a date (April 30, 2008) for troop withdrawal in the legislation to be approved by mid-September on funding operations in Iraq.

"... In this way, US President George W. Bush's successor will inherit the problem of the occupation of Iraq."

- "More denunciation about censorship and attacks against the Venezuelan media"

Miguel Wiazki, columnist of leading "Clarn," comments (09/07) "Venezuelan journalists feel they are attacked, chased and hampered in attempting to access official sources in their country.

"According to a study performed by IPYS (Instituto de Prensa y Sociedad) (Institute for the Media and Society), 60 percent of (Venezuelan) journalists feel they are being censored and admit self-censorship.

"The main obstacle they find is the 'closure of official sources.' 23 percent of the 192 professionals surveyed said that the Government systematically avoids talking to the journalists. And

another 20 percent said they are afraid of 'being attacked on the street by sectors aligned with the government'... Another 7 percent declared they are afraid of losing their jobs if they work with objectivity."

- "Official publicity and press freedom"

Daily-of-record "La Nacisin" (09/07) editorializes "The Argentine Supreme Court of Justice's recent ruling against the Neuquen Government... is a milestone that the Federal Government should take into account.

"If there is a major feature of the Kirchner administration, it is the discretionary way in which it has assigned its (press) publicity. As a matter of fact, the enormous increase in public expenditure on this item has not been accompanied by more transparency.

"It is not surprising that the Federal Government has increased its publicity expenditure by 388 percent... or that frequent claims have been made about the unequal distribution of those expenditures based on a seeming policy of reward and punishment of the mass media depending on their ties to the Government..."

"... Legislators should draft and pass legislation aimed at correcting the discretionary manner in which authorities distribute official press publicity funds."

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